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INTERIM REPORT ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE SECOND UNFPA COUNTRY PROGRAMME FOR EQUATORIAL GUINEA

REPORT BY THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

In response to Governing Council decision 93/27 C of 18 June 1993, this report provides information on the status of implementation of the UNFPA country programme for 1993-1997 in Equatorial Guinea.

I. INTRODUCTION

1. This report has been prepared in response to Governing Council decision 93/27 C, in which the Council approved the second comprehensive population programme (1993-1997) for Equatorial Guinea with the provision that the Executive Director of UNFPA should submit to the Council at its forty-first session an interim report on the implementation of the programme.

II. STATUS OF THE SECOND COUNTRY PROGRAMME

2. Based on the findings and recommendations of the August 1992 Programme Review and Strategy Development (PRSD) mission, the following objectives were established for the second UNFPA country programme:

(a) To increase awareness on population issues by developing and implementing a comprehensive and well-coordinated multimedia national population information, education and communications (IEC) programme;

(b) To integrate family planning services into maternal and child health (MCH) centres in order to help reduce maternal and infant morbidity and mortality;

(c) To enhance the status of women and promote their participation in national development activities;

(d) To strengthen national capacity to collect, process and disseminate population data and to carry out population research.

3. The current status of the implementation of the above objectives is described below.

A. Increasing awareness on population issues through a national multimedia IEC programme

4. With the support of UNFPA, the Government of Equatorial Guinea, through the Secretariat of State for Press, Radio and Television, has been promoting population IEC activities. This has been carried out through: (a) weekly radio and television programmes aimed at decision makers and the public at large; and (b) radio and television debates and programmes on issues relating to family life education, family planning, prevention of HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases (STDs), ante-natal and post-natal care, and women, population and development issues. In these activities, there has been good collaboration between the Secretariat and the various Ministries involved in population and population-related issues such as Justice and Religious Affairs, Health, Culture, Women's Affairs, Agriculture, and Planning and International Cooperation.

5. At the same time and to consolidate the above efforts, UNFPA is in the final stages of formulating its assistance to the IEC sector. This assistance is intended, inter alia, to provide the Government with the basic institutional framework and skilled human resources to promote and coordinate population IEC activities in the country and to increase awareness of population issues. The aim is to contribute to an effective change in attitudes towards population issues in the country.

B. Integrating family planning services into MCH centres to reduce maternal and infant morbidity and mortality

6. The Government has taken a number of positive steps to ensure that family planning services can be made available nationwide. For example, in March/April 1993, the Ministry of Health revised the country's restrictive law on family planning in accordance with WHO recommendations on Safe Motherhood and the

risk approach, which stresses the importance of addressing the needs of women most at risk during pregnancy. The revised law was discussed in April 1993 by the Interministerial Council and later by the Government Cabinet. It will be submitted to the new Parliament in 1994 for approval. In the meantime, the Government has explicitly authorized the implementation of family planning activities in all parts of the country.

7. To provide a technical framework for donors and to develop guidelines for delivering MCH/FP services within the national health system, the Ministry of Health organized a workshop in June 1993 to revise the national MCH/FP strategy, establish clinical norms and formulate supervision guidelines. The workshop was attended by 27 qualified health workers from the Ministry of Health as well as by experts from multilateral organizations such as WHO, UNICEF and UNFPA and from bilateral donor agencies, including Spain and Cuba, among others.

8. In October 1993, a new Family Welfare Association was created with substantial support from the Nairobi-based Regional Office of the International Planned Parenthood Federation (IPPF). The Association has been given accreditation by the Government.

9. The necessary conditions have thus been created for the effective take-off of the new MCH/FP activities proposed by UNFPA, which aim primarily at integrating Safe Motherhood services, including family planning services, into selected pilot MCH centres. The close collaboration with other donors and NGOs involved in the health sector will facilitate the implementation process.

C. Enhancing the status of women and promoting their participation in national development

10. As a first step towards achieving the objectives of the UNFPA country programme in this area, the Government has: (a) established a multi-disciplinary committee responsible for ensuring that women are integrated into the development process; and (b) assigned additional staff to the Ministry of Women and Social Affairs. These actions will greatly facilitate the implementation of the proposed women, population and development activities which seek, inter alia, to strengthen the institutional capacity of the Ministry, restructure the programmes of the Ministry's training centres and develop a multisectoral action plan that will provide the framework for donor assistance in the area of women, population and development.

D. Strengthening national capacity for data collection and research

11. The technical assistance provided in this area by the UNFPA Country Support Team (CST) based in Dakar, Senegal, has made it possible for the Government to implement requisite preparatory activities for the second population and housing census, namely, to update cartographic materials, design questionnaires, prepare technical documents for the census enumeration, train census fieldworkers, develop the publicity campaign and undertake the pilot census survey. The census enumeration could not take place in July 1993 as planned, however, because of the lack of financial resources. As a result, the enumeration will now take place in 1994. The technical assistance provided in this area is a good example of how effective the CST modality can be in the transfer of technology to national staff and the strengthening of national capacity.

12. During the year, the Government prepared a draft document recommending the creation of an interministerial Technical Population Committee and outlining the Committee's responsibilities, foremost among which would be the establishment of the goals and framework for a national population policy. The draft document must still be discussed later this year by all parties concerned before it can be officially adopted.

13. The Government has been active in the preparatory activities for the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD), scheduled to take place in Cairo, Egypt, in September 1994. It has established a National Preparatory Committee which has prepared the country report being submitted to the

Conference. The sensitization activities of the Committee have further enhanced the awareness of the general public to population issues.

III. PROGRAMME COORDINATION AND FUNDRAISING

14. UNFPA maintained regular contacts with multilateral organizations and bilateral donors accredited to the country to help coordinate technical assistance programmes and to mobilize additional resources for programme implementation. Potential donors expressed interest and their willingness to contribute to the IEC, Safe Motherhood/family planning, and women's activities. However, the interest shown has not yet been translated into actual commitments.

IV. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION BY THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

15. This interim report shows clearly the positive achievements made in 1993 as a result of the recent commitment of the Government to population issues under very difficult political conditions. UNFPA therefore reaffirms the relevance of the objectives and strategies of the second country programme to the population and development process of Equatorial Guinea.

16. The Executive Director therefore recommends the continued implementation of the second country programme for Equatorial Guinea as presented to the Governing Council at its fortieth session in document DP/FPA/CP/129.